

THE ETYMOLOGY OF DUTCH *BROEK* 'BREECHES'

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The etymology of OE *brōc* etc. is much discussed.¹ A good overview is found in AhdEW s. *bruoh*. PGM. *brōk- is often connected with *bhreg- 'to break'. This is etymology of the wrong type: take the first similar form and don't bother about the meaning. With this meaning nothing can be done, and the etymology should be given up. The comparison with Lat. *suffrāgō* 'back of an animal' is a possibility, but nothing more can be said. AhdEW rejects it because it cannot be combined with the e/o-series, but I don't see why it should. That *suffrago* would derive from *frangō* is also an improbable guess. According to Buck 1949, 425 the meaning 'back' is first found with certainty in Modern English.

I want to stress the form Lat. *bracca* beside *brāca*. This form is probably confirmed by Hesychius' βράκκα (though it is glossed δῦγειαι διφθέραι παρὰ Κέλταις; AhdEW accepts it).² Furthermore, Old English has *braecce*, pl. *braccas*. AhdEW 392 explains this as "späte Adoption", which seems most improbable to me for Old English (for modern Scandinavian languages the situation is different); I think it was proposed because there was no other solution. The Latin form is there (393) called "expressiv", which is not very probable either. It may have the variation as in *lītera/littera*, for which no rules have been found (Sommer-Pfister 156). As the geminate is found in Latin, Old English, and perhaps in the Celtic from which the Greek gloss was taken, I assume that the geminate was old. The variants -āk-/-akk- are typical of European substratum words; cf. Boutkan 1999, 22 n. 16, Beekes 1996, 231). This would mean that the word is a substratum

¹ I used the Dutch word in the title, as this word is still in full use.

² Note that Greek knew the form from three sources. One is the late loan from Latin. The word is found in papyri and an inscription; there are derivations: βρακία, βρακάριος, βρακαρία. The other is Diodorus Siculus 5.30 who says that the Galatians call them βράκας. The third probably is the Hesychius glosse on βράκκα just cited, as it states a fact about the Celts. It is remarkable that the accentuation points to a short a. Note, however, that the acc. pl. cited allows no conclusion on this point. The length of the vowel in the gloss, and perhaps also in the Latin loanword, may not be reliable.

word. There is, of course, no reason why the word should not be of non-Indo-European origin, and we should consider that possibility. (Even if the object was taken over from Iranians, it might well have got a 'local' name.) It is striking that e.g. in the AhdEW this possibility is not even mentioned.

If the word is non-Indo-European we may look for cognates in that field. When I looked at the etymology of French *branche* 'branch' (the English word is a loan from French), which is derived from (Lat.) *branca*, it occurred to me that the form of this word could be a variant of the word for 'breeches', and that the meaning would be compatible too. The word *branca* means 'paw' (see Ernout-Meillet). Thus also in Rumanian (*brînca*). See Pfeifer on Germ. *Pranke* 'Klaue, Hand, Pfote, Tatze', which is a loan from a Romance language. For the meanings, cf. Russ. *noga* ('nail, claw > foot, leg'). (In French it developed further into 'branch', which will have gone through 'leg'.) I would consider that trousers were called (after) the two 'legs', as would appear from the usual plural form. (Long trousers are old, Buck 425; Schrader-Nehring 1, 510, 513; but short ones have also the typical split in two 'legs'.) Russian has a word derived from the word for 'leg', *nogavíca* (Schrader-Nehring 1, 514), though this means 'Gamasche, gaiters'. Note that in several languages a word for 'leg' is used for the comparable elements of a pair of trousers: *Hosenbein, jambe, trousers-leg*. (Dutch has a quite different expression: (*broeks*)*pijp*, with the word 'pipe'.)

Thus the gemination can be easily explained, and both this and the proposed etymology would point to a non-Indo-European origin. Of course, the etymology cannot be proven; it is just suggested.

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